



California State University, Los Angeles
Department of Public Safety

NUMBER: III-4 APPROVED: _____
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SUPERSEDES: November 17, 2009 Reviewed/Revised: August 19, 2011

SUBJECT: **Collection of DNA Evidence**

I. PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for identifying, collecting and preserving DNA evidence at crime scenes.

II. POLICY:

It is the policy of this Department to ensure that all crime scenes are processed thoroughly and evidence collected to aid in the eventual prosecution of offenders. The effective exercise of law enforcement responsibility in the investigation of crime and in the prosecution of offenders requires that information be obtained through the application of scientific knowledge and methods.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. DNA. Is the abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), which is the genetic material present in the cells of all living organisms. DNA is the fundamental building block for an individual's entire genetic makeup. A person's DNA is the same in every cell (with a nucleus). The DNA in a person's blood is the same as the DNA in their skin cell, semen and saliva.
- B. Evidence. Any property related to a crime, or incident that may implicate or vindicate a person from a criminal charge. Items deemed "evidence" can be held on the most minor offenses to the most severe. Evidence items must be related to a crime and must be appropriately maintained. Penal Code Section 1417-1419 describes the proper options for disposing of evidence once a case has been adjudicated or closed.
- C. Evidence Controller. Refers to the person assigned to be accountable for all items of evidence or property held for safekeeping until their final disposition.
- D. Found Property. Property unrelated to a crime, which after coming into the possession of any Public Safety employee, has been determined to be lost. Refer to Property Management III-2 for information regarding Lost and Found Property and property disposals.

IV. PROCEDURES:

- A. First responder responsibilities and precautions.
 - 1. DNA is the fundamental building block for an individual's entire genetic make-up. DNA collected from a crime scene can either link a suspect to the evidence or eliminate a suspect.
 - 2. Qualified personnel shall be available on a 24-hour basis to process a crime scene of traffic accident.
 - 3. Generally, the Uniform Patrol Officer assigned the preliminary report shall process a crime or accident scene.
 - 4. In the more difficult or higher profile cases [i.e., sexual assaults, robbery, burglaries with a high loss value], the Watch Commander will make the decision on whether to notify Investigations for their response to process the scene. Uniform Patrol personnel will secure the scene in these cases until the transfer of responsibilities is established.
 - 5. First responders shall protect the crime scene from being contaminated by limiting the exposure to other elements and people to the area and items involved to an absolute minimum. Keep in mind that the current sensitivity of DNA testing can detect DNA from persons merely talking over or near evidence items.
 - 6. The reporting officer will note in the Incident/Crime Report who processed the crime scene and what forms of processing occurred.
 - a. The officer will note if photographs were taken and if a sketch was made.
 - b. If the scene was processed for fingerprints, this will be noted.
 - c. If no evidence was recovered after processing, or if the scene could not be processed due to contamination this will be noted in the report.
 - 7. The officer who processes the crime/accident scene will prepare a log of each item of evidence recovered at the crime scene.
 - a. The log will list each item numerically as it is recovered.
 - b. A description of each item of evidence recovered will also be noted.
 - c. Each item of evidence recovered or seized will be noted on a Property/Evidence Record form, which includes a documented transfer of custody.
 - 8. Officers/Investigators will conduct a preliminary scene survey once they have provided aid to the injured and determined no suspects remain on scene.
 - 9. Preliminary actions should include:
 - a. Observe and record (look but don't touch).
 - b. Determine nature and extent of the crime scene.
 - c. Determine location of evidence.
 - d. Determine order of collection.
 - e. Establish best working route.

- f. Duplicate movement of the perpetrator thoroughly and plan the search accordingly.
 - g. Note all existing conditions.
 - h. Note items out of place or damaged.
 - i. Note relationship between items.
 - j. Create an initial rough sketch.
10. The first officer on the scene will secure the scene and limit entrance to necessary personnel only. The watch commander will determine whether the scene is to be processed by patrol personnel or Department Investigators. The seriousness of the offense will be the deciding factor. In all major cases, Investigators will be notified to respond.
11. The officer or designee responsible for the scene shall:
- a. Assume control of the scene and protect evidence through the use of natural barriers or crime scene tape.
 - b. Conduct a preliminary scene survey.
 - c. Document those who enter and exit the scene.
 - d. Photograph the scene and any evidence.
 - e. Sketch and diagram the scene for any serious Part I crimes when a sketch may benefit the investigation.
 - f. Process the scene for physical evidence to include fingerprints, shoe and tire impressions, tool marks, hairs, fibers, and trace or biological evidence.
 - g. Package, label and collect items of evidence.
 - h. If the evidence is transferred to another person prior to being logged into the evidence system at the department, the officer shall document the transfer on the Evidence/Property bags to maintain the chain of custody.
- B. Guidelines and procedures used for the collecting, storage, and transportation of DNA evidence.
1. Contaminated gloves will be changed prior to handling other evidence to avoid cross-contamination.
 2. Use disposable instruments or clean them thoroughly before and after handling each sample.
 3. Avoid touching the area where you believe DNA may exist.
 4. Avoid talking, sneezing, and coughing over evidence.
 5. Avoid touching your face, nose, and mouth when collecting and packaging DNA evidence.
 6. Air-dry evidence thoroughly before packaging.
 7. Put evidence into “new” paper bags or envelopes, not into plastic bags. Do not use staples.
 8. DNA evidence can be collected virtually anywhere. The following chart is a guideline as to where officers/detectives /ID technicians might find DNA evidence at a crime scene:

EVIDENCE	Possible Locations	Possible Source of DNA
Baseball bat or similar weapon	Handle, end	Sweat, skin, blood, tissue
Hat, bandana or mask	Inside	Sweat, hair, danruff
Eyeglasses	Nose or ear pieces, lens	Sweat, Skin
Facial tissue, cotton swabs	Surface area	Mucus, blood, sweat, semen, earwax
Dirty laundry	Surface area	Blood, sweat, semen
Toothpick	Tips	Saliva
Used Cigarette	Cigarette butt	Saliva
Stamp or envelope	Licked area	Saliva
Tape or ligature	Inside/outside surface	Skin, sweat
Bottle, can, or glass	Sides, mouthpiece	Skin, sweat
Used condom	Inside/outside surface	Semen, vaginal, or rectal cells
Blanket, pillow, sheet	Surface area	Sweat, hair, semen, urine, saliva
“Through and through” bullet	Outside surface	Blood, tissue
Bite mark	Person’s skin or clothing	Saliva
Fingernail, partial fingernail	Scrapings	Blood, sweat, tissue

9. DNA Procedures for Collection, Storage, and Transportation

a. Collection Equipment.

- 1) Glassine paper (used for scraping)
- 2) Distilled or deionized water
- 3) Swabbing material:
 - Cotton swabs
- 4) Coin envelopes
- 5) Brown paper bags – assorted sizes
- 6) Scalpel blades or single edged razor blades.

b. Collection

- 1) Collect entire item
- 2) Cover stain on non-absorbent surfaces with glassine paper to prevent loss during transit.
- 3) Non-Absorbent Surfaces –Scraping
 - Scrape each stain with a new blade.
 - Scrape into a clean piece of paper.
 - Collect a control when necessary.
- 4) Non-Absorbent Surfaces –Swabbing
 - Moisten swab material with minimal distilled water.
 - Dry, then package in weighing paper.
 - Need controls
- 5) Dry Absorbent Surface, such as clothing collect entire item
- 6) Other surfaces use the cutting technique

c. Collection of Evidence from a Known Source

- 1) Evidence will be collected from known sources for submission to the laboratory for comparison with physical evidence recovered.

- 2) Materials and substances such as hair, fibers, paint, glass, wood, soil, and tool marks shall be collected from known sources whenever available.

d. Transportation and Storage

- 1) When transporting and storing evidence that may contain DNA, it is important to know that DNA evidence is best preserved in a cold or frozen condition. When that method of transportation or storage is not feasible, keep the evidence dry and at room temperature.
- 2) Once the evidence has been secured in paper bags or envelopes, it should be sealed, labeled, and transported in a way that ensures proper identification of where it was found and proper chain of custody.
- 3) Never place evidence that may contain DNA in plastic bags because plastic bags will retain damaging moisture.
- 4) Direct sunlight and warmer conditions also may be harmful to DNA, so avoid keeping evidence in places that may get hot, such as a room or police car without air conditioning.
- 5) Evidence will be forwarded to the Hertzberg-Davis Forensic Crime Lab as soon as possible, by the investigative officer.
- 6) If necessary, place dry DNA evidence into the refrigerator in the Police Department Property & Evidence area for temporary storage.

C. DNA Evidence Collection Training Requirement for personnel

1. All persons collecting DNA evidence should have completed field training in evidence collection methods and at the earliest opportunity attend a P.O.S.T. certified course covering field evidence collection to include DNA evidence collection.
2. The P.O.S.T. certified Crime Scene Investigator Course and Basic Detective Core Course, as well as certain field evidence courses meet this requirement.
3. The Investigations Section shall provide ongoing training through briefing sessions to ensure Patrol personnel understand their role in DNA evidence collection.

D. Procedures for submission of DNA evidence to accredited laboratories.

1. All evidence that is pertinent to identification and DNA typing shall be submitted for testing via established protocols of the receiving lab.
2. Evidence records shall be maintained as required of all evidence in reference property/evidence forms for documentation of transfer purposes in out of agency custody.
3. Analysis reports will be filed with the evidence and documented within follow-up supplementary written reports.

V. Appendices: None.